

## **Ireland**

### **Facts and Statistics**

**Location:** Western Europe, occupying five-sixths of the island of Ireland in the North Atlantic Ocean, west of Great Britain

**Capital:** Dublin

**Climate:** temperate maritime; modified by North Atlantic Current; mild winters, cool summers; consistently humid; overcast about half the time

**Population:** 10,348,276 (July 2004 est.)

**Ethnic Make-up:** Irish 87.4%, other white 7.5%, Asian 1.3%, black 1.1%, mixed 1.1%, unspecified 1.6% (2006 census)

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 87.4%, Church of Ireland 2.9%, other Christian 1.9%, other 2.1%, unspecified 1.5%, none 4.2% (2006 census)

**Government:** republic, parliamentary democracy

### **Language in Ireland**

Irish (Gaelic or Irish Gaelic) is a Goidelic language of the Indo-European language family, originating in Ireland and historically spoken by the Irish. Irish is now spoken natively by a small minority of the Irish population – mostly in Gaeltacht areas – but also plays an important symbolic role in the life of the Irish state. It enjoys constitutional status as the national and first official language of the Republic of Ireland and it is an official language of the European Union.

### **Irish Society and Culture**

#### **The Catholic Church**

Most people in the country are Roman Catholic. Until the early 1990s the church had a very strong voice in society as well as politics. Their role however has diminished. There is now something of a generational divide with people over 50 still being quite observant and conservative in their views. Religion still very much has a say in society's view of family, marriage, and abortion.

#### **The Family**

The extended family is still very much the dominant social structure although urbanization is having an impact. Even when family members do move to the cities you will often find their ties to "home" are still very strong.

#### **Humor**

The Irish have a reputation for their wit and humor – which they call having a 'crack'. As well as quick tongued with jokes they also make eloquent and witty speakers. They pride themselves on being able to find humour and it is often self-deprecating or ironic. It is common for the Irish to trade insults and tease one another (called "slagging") with people to whom they are close. If you are teased, it is important to take it well and not see it as personal. They have a rich history in storytelling which was used to pass information down through the generations (poems and songs also served the same purpose).